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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000233

SIPDIS

DOE FOR GPERSON, CHAYLOCK  
TREASURY FOR DFIELD, RHALL  
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS  
STATE PASS USTR FOR ASST USTR FLISER  
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART  
STATE PASS TDA FOR LFITT  
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER  
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/25/2016

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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: NOT SUMMIT BUT DEVELOPMENT, JOBS, JTF  
WITHDRAWAL NEEDED FOR NIGER DELTA PEACE

Classified By: Acting Consul General Helen C. Hudson, Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Chief Edwin Kiagbodo Clark said he has worked to bring "relative peace" to Delta and Bayelsa States ever since President Yar'Adua attached the Niger Delta to his seven point plan. Clark believes the Niger Delta needs not another summit conference but development and jobs, especially the return to civilians of jobs that have been taken over by the military. Clark listed three conditions for lasting peace in the Delta: 1) development of the Niger Delta's physical infrastructure; 2) involvement of Niger Delta youths in productive income-earning activity; and 3) gradual withdrawal of the armed forces. The solutions Clark is calling for are simple, straightforward, and require only political will to carry them out. Whether or not a summit is held, it remains to be seen whether the Government of Nigeria will exercise that will to relieve the suffering of the Niger Delta people. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Chief Edwin Kiagbodo Clark told Acting Consul General June 23 that he appealed to the youths who attacked the Bonga offshore facility and succeeded in persuading them to agree to a unilateral "ceasefire", announced June 21, after President Yar'Adua announced that he would send the military after the perpetrators. The youths recognized his influence, and credited his interventions as the reason for the ceasefire in their remarks to several newspapers, Chief Clark said. (Note: On June 26, the press reported that a coalition of groups calling itself the Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC), including the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Reformed Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force and the Martyr's Brigade had lifted the ceasefire. We also note that the original call for a cease-fire may not have had the blessing of all the reported aggressive militant groups in the region. End Note)

¶3. (C) Because President Yar'Adua attached the Niger Delta to his seven point plan, Clark said, he has spent a whole year overseeing and encouraging the success of a joint committee between the Federal Government and some youth leaders. His efforts have resulted in a "relative peace", in Delta and Bayelsa States, but not in Rivers, where Clark called the situation "peculiar". (Note: Clark's remark may refer to the

refusal of Rivers State's Governor Rotimi Amaechi's highly publicized refusal to "negotiate with militants." End Note) Despite his efforts in maintaining peace over the past year, the government has done nothing but plan for yet another conference, Clark said. The summit that is being planned can accomplish nothing that has not already been covered by the numerous commissions and reports issued in the past. All the reports, from those issued by commissions in colonial times to recent UNDP reports, say the same thing: that the Niger Delta needs development. The choice of Ibrahim Gambari to head the summit adds insult to injury; Gambari "tormented" the Ogoni people "who are part of us, and we have not forgotten", Chief Clark said. (Note: Gambari is reported to have called slain Ogoni activist Ken Saro-Wiwa a "common criminal." End note)

14. (C) The solution to the Niger Delta problem is a political one, not a military one, Chief Clark said. He praised the remarks made by Lieutenant General Luke Nyeh Yusuf, Chief of Army Staff, who in January said that he did not believe that the Niger Delta problem has reached a stage where it threatens the unity of the country. Henry Okah is just one part of a perverse system that has grown up in the Niger Delta; his trial cannot be kept isolated from that system, Clark said. (Note: Okah is being tried for treason in closed proceedings about which even his lawyer is forbidden to speak publicly. End Note) He went on to say the Niger Delta is an occupied territory, and the presence of the military fuels other problems. The military and ex-military are all deeply involved in illegal bunkering. The military wants trouble so that they have a reason to stay in the Delta and continue to

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make money. Whenever there is relative peace in an area, and the people begin to think about asking that the military be withdrawn, the military provoke confrontation or otherwise stir up the youths, Clark said.

15. (C) Another way the military makes money in the Delta is that they take jobs once performed by the indigenous youths. At one time, the indigenous people did all the petty jobs required by the oil companies around installations; now, however, those jobs are taken up by moonlighting soldiers. Local contractors are all run by the military. Even security services at the flow stations, once jobs held by local people, are now handled by the military. In the past, local families carried on a proud heritage as ship pilots, boarding ships to guide them safely into the harbors. Now, however, all such jobs have been taken over by moonlighting naval personnel.

15. (C) If not a summit, then what would bring peace to the Niger Delta, Acting Consul General asked Chief Clark. Three elements are essential, he said: 1) development of the Niger Delta's physical infrastructure; 2) involvement of Niger Delta youths in productive income-earning activity; and 3) gradual withdrawal of the armed forces. But instead, the people of the Niger Delta continue to be cheated by the Government of the benefits of the oil which is extracted from their back yards. Among many examples of this problem, he said, was the Petroleum Trust Development Fund (PTDF) which funds doctoral studies for students overseas; of over 1000 candidates shortlisted for these grants, only 14 are from the Niger Delta, including two from Delta State and one from Bayelsa, Clark pointed out. The people in the Niger Delta are without water to drink, they have no schools, no hospitals or functioning health centers; they are bitter, Chief Clark said. And when they see that their fathers cannot help them to obtain from the Government these minimal concessions, these basic necessities of life, they lash out at their oppressors.

16. (C) Comment: Throughout the year, the fragile peace in Delta and Bayelsa has, for the most part, held, unaided by any indications of progress toward economic development of the region. The solutions Clark is calling for are

reasonable, simple and straightforward; they require only political will to carry them out at all levels of government.

Whether or not a summit holds, it remains to be seen whether the Government of Nigeria will exercise that will to relieve the suffering of the Niger Delta people.

HUDSON